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ORGANIZING FOR EXTENSION WORK*

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Negro extension workers have wonderful opportunities to render a great and much needed service in improving farm life among their people, and should regard it as a privilege to be engaged in such work.

Through the community live-at-home program, a challenge is made, and extension work is provided for every member in the farm family and for every family in the community.

I feel that the extension directors and their staffs are very much interested in the welfare and success of Negro farmers, and have done much to further this work. There are many and varied problems encountered in carrying forward the extension program.

One of the most important things, therefore, that we can do is to organize our work properly in order to render sympathetic and effective service to our farm people.

In organizing for extension work it is necessary to know the essential needs of the farm family to be assisted. A practical way of obtaining this information is to organize a farmers' community club or association. The area included in the community should be of such size that farmers would not find it difficult to attend the meetings. The meeting places should be movable within the community; some meetings should be held at the homes of the farmers. Every farmer of the community should be invited to take an active part in the community program. No charges should be established that would prevent any farm family from taking part in the work. The organization should feel free to do the things it felt would contribute most toward meeting the needs of farm families and developing the community as a whole.

First in such organization the families should list their essential needs and then select a few of the important ones that apply to the largest number in the community, to be undertaken as the Program of Work. This program should point out the work to be done during the current year, and over a longer period of time as the need may require.

*Talk given during Negro Extension Service Conference of Southern States, Atlanta, Ga., February 3 to 5, 1941.

Farm families have been awakened and inspired to put forth proper efforts to meet their needs when the facts, setting forth the favorable and unfavorable things effecting those needs, have been brought to their attention and have been understood. Such steps, when properly taken in a community effort, lay a foundation of sound organization of farmers for constructive extension work. When farmers have taken such action on their part, the way is paved for extension workers to bring into action the various agencies of the United States Department of Agriculture to be used by those farmers as a means of helping themselves through their own efforts, to meet their needs.

This general plan of community organization will lend itself to any group of farmers. My thought has been that the program for a given community should be based on the needs of the families of that community. I might also suggest that the program of work for the county organization can be developed from the combined programs of work of the community organizations and the program of work for the State organization can be developed from a combination of the county programs of work.

A combined program of community live-at-home work has been successfully conducted for 15 years in Virginia. In 1939, 125 communities in 36 counties participated.

For example, Nansemond County, with a farm population of 6,273 persons has 765 farm operators. In Lummis Community (Nansemond County) the Program of Work for 1940 - and these for the past several years - included:

- Farm ownership.
- Family enrollment in community club.
- Having:
 - Homes painted.
 - Required feed for stock.
 - Required number of vegetable gardens.
 - Required number of poultry flocks.
 - Required number of hogs.
 - Required number of family cows.
- Cooperation with Triple-A program.
- Children in 4-H Club work.

There were 79 farm families in Lummis Community during 1940. Of this number, 66 were owners; 13 were tenants; 61 belonged to the community club and were enrolled in the live-at-home work; 38 had painted homes; 53 had required feed for stock; 72 had vegetable gardens; 76 had the required number of poultry flocks; 74 had the required number of hogs; 34 had family cows; 51 cooperated with the Triple-A program; and 45 of the 78 boys and girls of club age were in 4-H Club work.

Families in the community that had not formerly met the requirements as set forth in the program of work made the following improvements during 1940:

1 home was painted.
3 families produced required stock feed.
8 had the required vegetable garden.
5 had the required poultry flock.
6 had the required number of family hogs.
9 had the required number of family cows.
2 cooperated with the Triple-A program.
36 of the 4-H Club members completed the
year's work.

Organizing for extension work in this community effort, has become so well established among farmers that local leaders are able to carry forward the work with very little help from the county agent.

Farmers must learn how to think through their problems constructively, they must be alert and ready to pay the price for the things they need, and they must exercise thrift and economy in the use and preservation of the things they possess if they would attain a reasonable living from their vocation.

Distribution. A copy of this circular has been sent to each extension director; State leader and assistant leader (white and negro in Southern States) in county agricultural, home demonstration, and 4-H Club work; negro county agent in county agricultural, home demonstration, and 4-H Club work; extension editor; agricultural-college library, and experiment-station library.



